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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 13 April 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Today, I write to bring to your attention the critical plight of the thousands of Palestinian civilians being held captive in jails and detention centres of Israel, the occupying Power.

On Monday, 17 April 2017, Palestinians all over the world, including those living in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, will observe Prisoners' Day in solidarity with the more than 6,500 Palestinians, including 53 women and 300 children, currently imprisoned by Israel, among them nearly 700 who are being held in administrative detention without charge. These Palestinians are among the more than 800,000 Palestinians, including children, kidnapped and imprisoned by the occupying Power across the 50 years of occupation since 1967 in its near-daily military raids and arrest and detention campaigns, targeting the entire population, men, women and children, with male youth especially vulnerable. Regrettably, Israel's arrest campaigns have intensified in the past two years and continue unabated, effectively turning every part of Palestine into some form of prison, detention camp or interrogation facility.

The horrendous and deplorable conditions of Israeli captivity, which threaten the well-being, safety and lives of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, are by now well known and well documented by international human rights organizations, including Israeli organizations. Day in and day out, Palestinian prisoners and detainees are subjected to various forms of physical and psychological abuse by the occupying forces. They are forced to live in unsanitary, unhygienic conditions and are routinely deprived of their right to education and health care, as well as repeatedly denied family visits and access to legal aid. Moreover, forced interrogations, violent beatings, solitary confinement, humiliation, threats to themselves or their family members and the widespread use of other forms of torture continue with impunity.

This year, in an effort to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinian prisoners, hundreds of Palestinian prisoners have pledged to go on hunger strike in

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observance of Prisoners' Day, which will be led by the imprisoned Palestinian leader, Marwan Barghouti, who is also a member of the Fatah Central Committee and an elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Thus far, over 1,600 Palestinian prisoners from across the political spectrum have committed to take part in the open-ended hunger strike to protest the inhumane, oppressive Israeli measures that continue to deprive them of their basic human rights.

While the hunger strike aims to highlight and expose many of the illegal, abusive Israeli practices mentioned above, it also strives to ensure that the most basic rights and requests of the prisoners and detainees are attained. Some of their specific demands include additional family visits, as well as visits that are 30 minutes longer in duration. They are requesting the right to take photos with their family members every three months and to be allowed visits by their children and grandchildren who are under the age of 16. Moreover, given that their right to education and health care continues to be denied and violated, they are specifically requesting for routine medical exams to be conducted, timely surgery for those in need and the release of prisoners or detainees with disabilities or life-threatening illnesses. There are also other basic demands, such as the use of books and the right to study and take exams that will allow them to pursue or receive an education, which is so essential for their future and the future of our society and country.

In the light of the grave violations of the rights of Palestinian prisoners and detainees that continue to be perpetrated by the occupying Power, as we approach Prisoners' Day, we renew our call on the international community to call on Israel to release the thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children, women and elected officials, whom it is illegally and inhumanely imprisoning and detaining. Moreover, the international community must act to compel Israel's compliance with international law, including humanitarian law, specifically article 76 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which clearly defines the rights of protected persons faced with detention by an occupying Power.

As the marking of 50 years of Israel's occupation of our people and land is nearing, we reiterate our appeal to all members of the international community to make their voices heard loud and clear to the occupying Power, that its violations against our people will not be tolerated and must be immediately halted and that continued impunity will be met with accountability. In this regard, the world's support for the prisoners' hunger strike, a peaceful, non-violent measure of protest against Israel's extreme abuse, is justified and a step in the right direction.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 608 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 31 March 2017 (A/ES-10/748-S/2017/275), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations